

A JOURNEY TO
LOWER OREGON

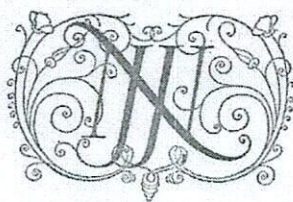
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Upper California

1848-49

By

REV. SAMUEL C. DAMON



San Francisco:

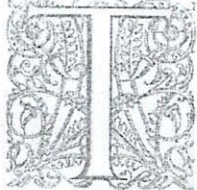
JOHN J. NEWBEGIN

1927

*Astoria in 1840s
(on acid)*

CHATHAM, to make an exploration. This enterprise was most successfully accomplished; Lieutenant Broughton, with boats, ascending as far up the river as Fort Vancouver, about 90 or 100 miles from its entrance. On his return down the river the JENNY, a vessel belonging to Bristol, England, was found anchored in the bay, within Cape Disappointment. This noted Bay was denominated "Baker's Bay" by Lieutenant Broughton in compliment to Captain Baker, commanding the JENNY, which vessel took the lead on leaving the bay, and was followed by the CHATHAM.

Chapter III. *Astoria.*

 HIS morning, Wednesday, May 9th, the MASSACHUSETTS left Baker's Bay for Astoria, a distance of ten or twelve miles. The river is several miles wide, but the ship-channel is somewhat intricate, and difficult of navigation, except to experienced pilots. Twice the vessel touched the sand spits, but was backed off by the propeller with little damage or difficulty. She came to anchor off the city, the town, or village of Astoria, about 1 o'clock. Just as we were sitting down to dinner, General Adair, the collector, called on board. He was much rejoiced to learn that Captain Wood had piloted the MASSACHUSETTS in safety over the bar. This feeling I subsequently learned was quite general among the inhabitants, not only of Astoria, but of the territory. They felt that the bar and river were suffering in consequence of ill-founded reports which had been circulated. The first American steamship, which had ever attempted to enter, had now come safely up the river, without a pilot, in the most difficult parts of the channel. Not only did the Astorians seem really to confer upon our captain the hospitalities of the city, but General Adair proposed calling the next new county in Oregon *Wood County*. The MASSA-

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CHUSETTS, being the largest vessel which had ever entered the river, and moreover having arrived bringing two companies of U.S. troops, was thrice welcome. So many of the male inhabitants of Oregon being absent at the mines, serious fears were entertained that more Indian troubles if not massacres would occur. General Adair furnished us with the latest news from the United States and Europe, but having recently arrived from California, he had tales to rehearse about the abundance of gold that would have satisfied a gold adventurer of the sixteenth century.

After dinner a party visited the shore—the army officers were delighted to receive intelligence through the post-office. General Adair gave us a cordial Kentucky welcome to his house, where we were kindly entertained by his family. The General had only been in the place about one month, but yet he had succeeded in erecting during that short period a very comfortable dwelling, as good as those tenanted by his neighbors. Neither nature, nor as yet art, seems to have conferred great attractions upon Astoria. The village contains about twenty buildings of every description, erected without order or regularity as regards the streets. A visitor is somewhat surprised the site should have been selected for a city, when others far more desirable might have been chosen. The inhabitants are rendered quite uncomfortable by the cold, strong and disagreeable winds which prevail. The town I would remark is upon the south side of the Columbia, being at this point four or five miles in width. The prospect from the hills upon which some of the houses are built is exceedingly fine. It commands a view of the ocean, the mouth of the river, Cape Disappointment, Chinook hills, the highlands on the opposite side of the river, and the extensive ranges of hills and mountains stretching away to the east. The region was formerly covered with a heavy growth of pines, and only a small area has been reclaimed from the dominion of nature. As the visitor looks out upon the peaceful little


village snugly crowded under the shade of stately forest trees, he is ready to ask, "Is this Astoria?" Is this the spot so famous in history, and of world-wide celebrity? It was for this place that forty years ago the ships of Astor took their departure, via Cape Horn, when a voyage hither was among the uncommon occurrences of the times. Here were the headquarters of the North West Fur Company, and subsequently of the Hudson Bay Company, until the establishment of Fort Vancouver. Among the English, Astoria, even now, is denominated "Fort George." Thus historical associations of interest are connected with this spot, but the fascinating narrative of Washington Irving, styled *Astoria*, has contributed more powerfully than any other cause to render the place remarkable, and in coming time somewhat classic ground. The ingredient of romance forms so prominent a characteristic of Irving's writings, that many readers imagine his *Astoria* belongs to the same class. History, genuine history, and faithful narrative, are most prominent in this work, the value of which will be highly prized by the reader who delights to trace out historical incidents associated with the place which he may visit.

It is certainly a remarkable as well as interesting fact, that although the United States Government possesses the whole of Oregon, having for a long period maintained with England a joint occupancy of the country, yet it is only the narrow and small district of Astoria, which has ever been, in reality, purchased from the aborigines of the country! Indian titles to the vast domain have not as yet been extinguished by purchase and treaties.

While at Astoria I made inquiries respecting the settlement of Clatsop Plains, situated on the south shore of the Columbia, near its mouth. I learned that a thriving settlement had been commenced, consisting of about thirty families, which are engaged in agricultural pursuits. They are supplied with the preaching of the Gospel by a Presbyterian and a Baptist minister. As an evidence of the enterprise

of the people, this fact is worthy of record. Being perplexed about getting their produce to the California market, vessels visiting the river not affording the desirable facilities, one of the inhabitants immediately laid the keel of the CLATSOP CLIPPER, a vessel of sixty or seventy tons, and in three months it was freighted, bound to California! Eventually, ship building will be extensively prosecuted along the banks of the Columbia. Timber suitable for ship building exists in the greatest abundance. Remarked an officer of our ship, as he gazed upon the forests of pine, from two to three hundred feet in height and straight as an arrow, "What a place to get masts, here are enough for all the shipping in the world."

Chapter IV. *Ascent of the Columbia.*

OON after our vessel came to anchor off Astoria, the J. W. CARTER, Captain Hoyt, arrived from Portland on the Willamette, having on board a pilot, Mr. Lattie, well acquainted with the navigation of the Columbia. His services were immediately secured for the MASSACHUSETTS, as otherwise we might have been detained for many days. About 3 o'clock, P.M., May 10th, we left Astoria, proceeding up the river. One hour afterwards the MASSACHUSETTS was fast upon a sand spit off Tongue Point. It is not an uncommon occurrence for vessels to get aground at this place; indeed, the very first vessel that ever attempted to ascend the river after its discovery by Captain Gray, got aground at this very place. I refer to the CHATHAM, commanded by Lieutenant Broughton. At this point, he left his vessel and proceeded to explore the river in "the cutter and launch with a week's provisions." The COLUMBIA did not advance higher up the river than this place, and to commemorate the discovery of Captain Gray, the bay lying upon the north shore of the river, was

reward the literary man and the scientific explorer. I hope soon to hear of the organization of an historical society among the literary men of Oregon, and also that the lovers of the sciences—botany, geology, minerology, zoology—have their associations. It is occasion of just pride to Oregon, that the clergymen of the various denominations are laborious and energetic men. They have it in their power to accomplish an immense amount of good connected with the literary and scientific institutions of the territory. May *Oregon* become the *New England* of the Pacific.

This morning, 16th of June, 7 o'clock, left Astoria, and the MASSACHUSETTS recrossed the bar of the Columbia in safety. Today is the sixtieth since leaving Honolulu. We were twenty-one to the river, five days ascending; the vessel lay twenty-nine at Fort Vancouver and Portland, and this is the fifth since leaving the former place. Now, we are once more safely at sea, bound to San Francisco. Ho, for California!



Chapter XVIII. *Departure for California.*

THE prevailing winds along the coast being from the northwest, vessels are enabled to make quick passages from the mouth of the Columbia River to the Bay of San Francisco. The distance is about four hundred miles. I met the master of a vessel in the Columbia River, who had just made the passage down in seventy-eight hours from Baker's Bay to the anchorage at San Francisco, although on his return passage up the coast he was fifteen days, which is considered a very good passage. Vessels are oftentimes twice that length of time in sailing from San Francisco to the Columbia

River. The MASSACHUSETTS crossed the bar of the Columbia on Saturday morning, and on the following Tuesday afternoon, she was off the entrance of the Bay, but prevented from entering on account of the dense fog.

On the Sabbath, we had Divine service on board. Captain Wood being ever ready to show respect for the Day, he most readily made arrangement for the assembling of the ship's company in the large and commodious cabin. It was our expectation to have listened to a discourse from the Rev. Mr. Roberts, a fellow passenger, but just before the time for holding service, he was obliged to inform us that it would be impossible for him to preach on account of sea-sickness.

We had some most agreeable passengers from Oregon, viz.: Judge Bryant, the Rev. Mr. Roberts, and Dr. Welsh; thus each of the learned professions had its representative. Judge Bryant is at the head of the Judiciary Department in the Territory. He is a native of Kentucky, but has practiced law for about twenty years in Indiana. It is his intention to remove his family to Oregon and make that his permanent residence. The Rev. Mr. Roberts is the superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Mission, in Oregon and California, and was on a visit to the latter country for the purpose of completing arrangements for the future supply of Upper California with ministers of the gospel, under the direction and patronage of the Methodist denomination. Their system of itinerary preaching is admirably calculated for a newly settled country. Methodist ministers may well be compared to those light-armed troops, who proceed in advance of the main body of an invading army. Their system has accomplished an untold amount of good throughout the sparsely settled districts upon the western frontier of the United States. Mr. Roberts informed me that in September a convention of Methodist clergymen would assemble at Salem, in Oregon, for the purpose of organizing an annual conference, embracing Oregon, California, and New Mexico. This